



Media Advisory

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Texas Conservationist Wins 2004 National Wetlands Award

Sky Lewey from Uvalde, Texas has won the 2004 National Wetlands Award for Education and Outreach. She will be honored at a ceremony on May 20th at the Senate Caucus Room in Washington, DC for her service as the Public Outreach Coordinator for the Nueces Valley River Authority.

The River Authority's area includes 23 watersheds stretching across 17,000 square miles of south Texas. The booming popularity of off-road vehicle recreation was destroying riverbeds and fragile riparian areas along the headwater streams of the Nueces basin. Destruction was occurring in remote wetlands, out of the public's eye. Lewey drew on her diverse background and experiences to bring abuse of the rivers to statewide attention.

"In short order, she reached thousands of youngsters with the wetlands protection message, and she continues to expand innovative programs to reach more," said Susan Allen Lynch of Friends of the Frio and American Rivers. Lewey educates both children and adults in traditional classrooms, on the river itself, in boardrooms, and even in barns.

"Sky became a standout in state wetlands protection when she, working with biologists, conservationists and landowners, helped document and quantify the damage and bring the problem to the attention of state lawmakers," said Lynch, who nominated Lewey for the award. "Then she helped build a statewide citizens coalition to push for [Texas State] Senate Bill 155, which prohibits vehicles in Texas Rivers."

Though Senate Bill 155 was enacted in 2003, Lewey's work continues. "There are plenty more destructive behaviors to change," said Lewey. "There are still people that look at our rivers and see only rock and water. They need to know that those creeks, rivers, springs, and seeps represent complex living communities that demand our stewardship."

"Sky exemplifies the best in commitment and persistence to win over hearts and minds for wetlands protection," said Lynch.

Since 1989, the National Wetlands Awards program has honored exceptional individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary effort, innovation, and excellence in wetland conservation, research, or education through programs or projects at the regional, state, or local level. The program is co-sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"We are grateful for the exceptional efforts of these awardees," said Major General Carl A. Strock, Director of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Their efforts to protect and preserve our nation's wetlands help sustain healthy aquatic habitats for diverse species of plants, fish, and wildlife. The well-being of natural communities is essential to the quality of our lives."

For more information please contact Erica Pencak at the Environmental Law Institute at (202) 939-3822 or wetlandsawards@eli.org, or visit www.eli.org/nwa/nwaprogram.htm.

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